Allman talks about appreciation for life; to play Tahoe

By Donna Isbell Walker, Gannett

At 64, Gregg Allman is lucky to be alive.

For more than three decades, as the face and blues-soaked voice of the Allman Brothers Band, Allman lived as hard and fast as he possibly could.

Copious amounts of drugs and alcohol eventually took their toll, and a 1995 intervention by friends was the impetus for his sobriety. In 2010, Allman underwent a liver transplant necessitated by all those years of abuse.

Allman, who comes to the South Shore Room at Harrah's Lake Tahoe on Saturday, has made quite a turnaround, and these days he sees things from a whole different perspective.

If he could live his life over again, "I would erase all drugs and alcohol," Allman said in a recent phone interview from his home in Savannah, Ga. "They were nothing but a hindrance, nothing but a deterrent. … They came out with that one commercial where they said, 'Cocaine is a lie.' It's all a lie, all of it. Alcohol is not supposed to be ingested, maybe a little wine. But hard liquor, it just eats away at the lining of all your intestines."

He has spent the past few years learning about the effects of drugs and alcohol on the human body, with the same passion he once put into scoring the drugs and chugging the drinks.

"I have gone to great lengths to find out just what each one of these things that I used to take does to you. It's a nightmare. No wonder I had to have a new liver. And thank God

that they can do that. I give thanks every day, every day, morning and night. I'm so grateful to be alive," Allman said.

Much of that journey is recounted in Allman's memoir, "My Cross to Bear," which came out earlier this year. The book is a raw, down-and-dirty look at a life of career highs and lows, intense love affairs, including a marriage to Cher, and unspeakable pain, particularly the death of his brother Duane.

"My Cross to Bear" began as a journal in the early 1980s, Allman said. He mostly wrote it as a way to remember and reflect on his life, never intending to publish it.

"I was thinking, this is great, I really need to write this stuff down, go into real detail about it, so when I get to be real old – old codger sittin' on the front porch in a rockin' chair – I can pick out a few of these pages and it'll take me right back," he said.

His manager saw the journal and encouraged Allman to turn it into a book.

Allman didn't gloss over his own flaws in writing about his life. "A lot of people said, 'Man, you let 'em know a little too much, didn't you?' And I don't think so, no," he said.

One of the toughest parts was writing about Duane, his beloved older brother and bandmate, who was killed in a 1971 motorcycle crash. Allman speaks haltingly about reliving that chapter of his life.

"It's hard, you know. There's not a day that passes that I don't think of him," he said. "There were parts of (writing) it that were gotten through a little bit slower than other parts."

Through it all, Allman said, he has had the rare gift of being able to build a career around what he loves the most.

"I looked around and thought, man, what a wonderful life I

have to be so fortunate as to have your passion be the way you make your living also. I mean, that is so fortunate," he said. "So many hundreds of thousands of people just trudge to work and trudge home and go searching for the right amount of the legal tender. It's so sad. I mean, get on the freeway, (complain) about this and that, the price of gas and all. The white-shirt army, I am so glad I don't belong to it."

Saturday's show is part of a short tour in support of Allman's latest solo album, "Low Country Blues," a collection of traditional blues songs, along with a new tune written by Allman and his Allman Brothers bandmate Warren Haynes.

It's his first solo project in 14 years. "Isn't that ridiculous?" he said with a chuckle.

For much of that interim, Allman was focused on maintaining his sobriety and regaining his health.

But another factor was the 2002 death of his longtime producer Tom Dowd, a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee who produced most of the Allman Brothers Band's catalog.

The right producer is a crucial part of the recording process, Allman said, explaining that "he hears things that you don't hear."

The producer helps to weave all of the musical elements into one cohesive piece, and "he becomes real, real important. … You really start leaning on this person."

Dowd was that person for Allman, beginning with the Allman Brother's Band's iconic 1971 live album "At Fillmore East."

After Dowd's death, "to have to break another one of these in, pardon the expression there, but it's like too big of a hill to climb for the stuff that was going on in my life then."

Eventually, he connected with T-Bone Burnett, best known for his work on the "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack, and

“Low Country Blues” was released last year.

Allman’s current tour features only a handful of dates over a six-week period. That’s because he’s taken a bigger role in scheduling his tours.

“I don’t do more than two concerts in a row,” Allman said. “The first one just kind of oozes out. And the second one, you actually put a little effort into it, and it really smokes. But the third one, I don’t know, it’s like, ‘We’re gonna do this again?’”

Having the breaks between each date keeps the shows fresh, and Allman said he wishes he had taken the reins sooner.

“I should have done that all along,” he said. “Of course, I didn’t have my butt in the seat, shifting all the gears. That takes a few years to happen. My grandfather told me, ‘You have to have your foot in the door, your butt in the seat, shifting all the gears. Then you’re going somewhere.’”

Letter: St. Theresa School grateful for help with bad boiler

To the community,

This past Saturday morning I stopped by St. Theresa School with our kindergarten teacher to check on classroom pets because of how cold it was the night before. When we got into the building we quickly realized that something was wrong with the boiler.

I felt bad but, I called Father Grace because no one knows the school's boiler like he does. We discovered that the circulating pump motor had died and with a boiler that is almost 55 years old that it was not something that was going to be easily replaced. He and I both started making phone calls to see what could be done.

Adam Ricards, who helps us with projects around the school, helped figure out where exactly the problem was located. We brought in space heaters and placed them

strategically in each classroom and prayed that that would help the pipes until we could find a new motor. On Monday we were able to order the motor with help from Don at Ferguson Plumbing/PVF. It arrived on Tuesday and was installed that day.

With help from our wonderful community, the students only missed one day of school and we were able to save all of our pipes.

I would like to thank the following people for helping us during our lack of heat emergency: Charlie Carr, Romeo Alaoen, Tom Finn, Western Nevada Supply, Don at Ferguson Plumbing, Adam Ricards, Danette Winslow, Sharon Filipko, Joanie San Agustin, and of course Father Grace.

Anne Filce, principal St. Theresa School

South Tahoe grad combines music and skiing

By Ron Dicker, Huffington Post

Call it the new slide trombone.

Los Angeles-based musician Sean Pawling played “Ride of the Valkyries” while downhill skiing in Lake Tahoe recently.

Watch Pawling carve out turns and hit the right notes in the best (well, only) trombone gig we’ve ever seen on packed powder. Next time we’d like to see him play on a slalom course.

Pawling is a Lake Tahoe native and South Tahoe High grad who writes trombone music inspired by his hometown, according to his website. But for this run, he borrowed a classic by Wagner.

His YouTube video, which was posted on Jan. 10, has collected more than 225,000 views and caught the attention of the Trombone Forum.

While Pawling’s stunt is fun and somewhat impressive, it isn’t exactly Black Diamond in ambition compared to another musical skiing performance we spotted. In 2006, the entire UC Davis marching band played while skiing downhill.

If you’d like to take Pawling’s sequel for a run, you can view it below.

Ski report: Carving time



Plenty of groomers with lots of sunshine

Here is the Jan. 17 ski report.

— Curtis Fong

Time to sign up for magnet school lottery

Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School is taking names for the Fall 2013 “line-up” of kindergartners.

Children who will be turning 5 on or before Dec. 2 qualify. Parents much fill out a form at the school office to be part of the lottery.

The deadline to apply is March 27. Names will be pulled April 1.

The school is located at 1095 East San Bernardino Ave., at the end of Apache in Meyers.

Science through theater engages students

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Suddenly the sun is gone. Plants wither. People and animals die. No air to breathe. No water to drink.

Briefly, all of this happened at Zephyr Cove Elementary School on Jan. 15. It was all to show the students how important the sun is to the survival of life on Earth.

They actually showed themselves as they took on various roles.

In a whirlwind of interactive learning, students in Brenda Capshaw's third-grade class are being taught about the solar system. Diane Handzel is taking over the class for an hour for eight Tuesdays to teach them a bit of science through theater.

The students act out parts in a variety of skits. It's nonstop action even though it's part lecture, part video, part question-answer, part acting. There is no down time. It's all about learning, even if the kids think it's playtime.



Third-graders at Zephyr Cove Elementary on Jan. 15 learn about the sun. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This is the third year Handzel, who runs Get in the Act! Arts in Action, has worked at Zephyr Cove. And in that time science test scores have gone up.

“There is no real data that Arts and Action helps life science scores, but I like to think it did,” Principal Nancy Cauley told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Not only are the students learning facts about the solar system, they get to act out in crazy, creative ways that kids love.”

The money to pay for the Arts and Action program comes from the parent-teacher club.

The third-graders are broken into groups representing animals, humans, water, land and air. Amongst themselves they are to figure out why their group is the most important to the Earth. While they all came up with viable reasons, in the end, it was the sun that is ultimately the most important.

When asked what they learned about the sun, they raised their hands, to say: it’s made of gases and atoms, it’s the only star in our solar system, it gives off light and energy, without it the Earth would float away because of the lack of gravity, and that it’s the center of the solar system.

Handzel and a colleague created the Stateline company in 2009. They work throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin – including Tahoe Valley Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe, Truckee Elementary, and Tahoe Lake Elementary in Tahoe City.

“We work with the teacher and the classroom curriculum,” Handzel told *Lake Tahoe News* after wrapping up the sun segment. (Next week she will focus more on planets.) It’s about introducing vocabulary and science concepts. And it’s geared to the appropriate grade level.

Second-graders might learn about magnets, while fifth-graders get instruction on electricity.

“I believe she has had an impact on how kids see the world through science,” Cauley said. “They have a better understanding of science because they were able to use every sense of being to act it and be it.”

Future of Livestrong’s affiliation with ACC uncertain

By Kathryn Reed

Officials with the American Century Championship golf tournament are saying it’s too soon to know if Livestrong will remain the official charity.

The annual celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline has been affiliated with Livestrong the last seven years.



Livestrong has a strong presence at the annual Lake

Tahoe celebrity golf tournament – including on the flag and caddie. Photo/LTN file

While Lance Armstrong has been accused of wrongdoing, the foundation he created in 1996 after surviving testicular cancer is not under scrutiny.

Armstrong played in the Lake Tahoe golf tournament in 2006. The gallery following him rivaled Michael Jordan's.

"Plans have yet to be determined regarding tournament beneficiaries," Phil Weidinger, who runs the public relations arm of the tournament, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "As in previous years, an official announcement will be made by American Century Investments in spring."

Through Livestrong local charities have shared in a pot of cash that some years totaled more than $100,000.

Livestrong has been printed on the back of caddies' vest, on the sail of the investment firm's boat anchored near the 18th hole, on leader boards, as well as there being a tent just for the organization. It has become an integral part of the annual South Shore event.

Tonight the disgraced cyclist's confession to Oprah Winfrey of using performance-enhancing drugs during his career will play out on television sets around the world.

On Oct. 17 Armstrong resigned as chairman of the board of Livestrong and on Nov. 4 he left the board. He has been banned from cycling for life and stripped of his seven Tour de France titles.

Letter: Collaborative effort for Bread & Broth holiday meal

To the community,

Thanks to a Secret Santa and the Kagan and Catton families, a very special meal was served at the Bread & Broth Christmas Eve dinner. Prime rib, generously donated by a local Secret Santa, was the main course for the dinner.

The Kagan and Catton family donated the remainder of the meal fixings which included mashed potatoes, mushroom gravy, fresh veggies, salad and drinks.

The tasty homemade dinner rolls and desserts served were provided by Jeanettee Shippee and the Culinary Arts Program at the El Dorado County Jail.

In addition to their monetary donations, Kagan family members helped in the meal preparation and serving.

Cherie Kagan, a B&B volunteer cook on the fourth Monday of every month, has sponsored the B&B Christmas week meal for the past three years and she once again led the cooking efforts for the Christmas dinner.

“It is a tremendous blessing to be able to gift back to our community in this way during the holidays when so many of our

local families in need," she said.

Bread & Broth is very thankful for and fortunate to have volunteers and donors like the Kagan and Catton families and our many anonymous donors like the Christmas dinner's Secret Santa. It's the generous donors of the community which provide funds and volunteer hours that have enabled B&B to provide nutritious and tasty meals to the neediest in the community.

If you would like to support the all volunteer, nonprofit Bread & Broth program, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Kim Wyatt, owner of Meyers-based Bona Fide Books, has been nominated for Beyond the Margins' Above and Beyond award for her writing-editing-publishing work. Bona Fide has also revamped its website.

• Consider going to a national park on Jan. 21. Entrance is free at all of them on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

• Lake Tahoe Community College's Fitness Education Center is scheduled to reopen Jan. 17 at 6am.

• Residents who live in the Placer County Sheriff Office's jurisdiction may sign up to receive notification of crimes that occurred in their neighborhoods by going online and following the link to Crimemapping.com.

• Nevada received an F from the American Lung Association for its tobacco control and prevention efforts.

Energy drinks causing people to frequent emergency rooms

Publisher's note: ***"I found a total of three patients in 2012 who had diagnoses containing the words 'energy drink' or 'red bull' or 'caffeine' – the last one was thought to be due to the effects of '5 hour energy'. So not unheard of, but certainly no epidemic here," Warren Withers, medical director for Barton Memorial Hospital Emergency Department, told Lake Tahoe News.***

By Doug Podolsky, Consumer Reports

On these short winter days, some people might find themselves eyeing caffeinated energy drinks for a little boost. But perk up your ears: Emergency room visits for problems related to energy drinks have risen sharply, particularly for people age 40 and older, according to a government study out last week.

The number of ER visits involving energy drinks doubled overall from 10,068 in 2007 to 20,783 in 2011, according to the latest data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department visits.

In each year from 2007 to 2011, more males than females went to the ER for energy drink-related care. And there were more patients age 18 to 39 than in other age groups. Notably, the

largest increase was seen among people age 40 and older, for whom ER visits jumped 279 percent, from 1,382 in 2007 to 5,233 in 2011.

Fifty-eight percent of the energy drink-related ER visits in 2011 were for adverse events associated with the sole use of energy drinks. The remaining 42 percent involved energy drinks in combination with pharmaceutical drugs such as the central nervous system stimulants Adderall and Ritalin, alcohol, or illicit drugs including marijuana.

“Consumption of energy drinks is a rising public health problem because medical and behavioral consequences can result from excessive caffeine intake,” the report says. “A growing body of scientific evidence documents harmful health effects of energy drinks, particularly for children, adolescents, and young adults.”

Older adults may also be vulnerable to adverse effects associated with energy drinks, the authors indicated, possibly because they take medications or have medical conditions. The findings were published Jan. 10 in the DAWN Report.

In response, the American Beverage Association, a trade association based in Washington, D.C., issued a statement this week pointing out that the report does not provide data on the overall health of the patients, what symptoms brought them to the ER, or their overall caffeine intake.

Bottom line: Large amounts of caffeine can cause adverse effects such as insomnia, nervousness, headache, fast heartbeat, and seizures that are severe enough to require emergency care, according to the government’s DAWN report. See our Ratings in Consumer Reports to find the caffeine content of 27 top-selling energy drinks and shots. And read our recent blog about the Food and Drug Administration’s safety review of energy drinks. If you experience adverse events you believe may be related to energy drinks (or other FDA-regulated

products) ask your health care provider to report it to the FDA’s MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting Program or report it yourself.